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PROGRAM	The Today Show	STATION	WRC TV NBC Network
DATE	May 15, 1978	7:00 AM	CITY Washington, D. C.
SUBJECT	An Interview with William Colby		

JANE PAULEY: Until very, very recently, the rule was a book about the CIA was probably a novel. Well, that is not the case any more. The latest author is with Tom right now.

Good morning.

TOM BROKAW: William Colby has spent most of his adult life in American Intelligence, from his OSS days in World War II where he parachuted into France and in Norway, to eventually when he became the Director of the CIA and then was fired by former President Ford in the middle of a controversy about that agency. He's now written a book called Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA, about the good times and the bad for that agency; the good times and the bad in the life of William Colby.

You were fired by President Ford because, in part, you were too cooperative with congressional investigations into CIA abuses. In fact, you quote Vice President Rockefeller as saying "Bill, you really have to present all of this material to us?" But you felt strongly that you had to do that at the time. Now that you are out, have you been ostracized by some of your former associates in the agency, such as Richard Helms, who was a former Director and kind of a sponsor of yours at one point, and James Angleton, who was one of the intelligence brains at one time?

WILLIAM COLBY: Well, there was an argument in the agency about how to handle the whole thing. And there were different points of view. And I think Angleton, for one, and I differed on how to approach things. We never were all that close, even there. So there's no particular reason for us to be close afterwards.

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BROKAW: But what about the attitudes, for instance, of former friends and associates like Richard Helms towards you now that this has all occurred?

COLBY: Well, I really can't speak for him. I'm not going to speak for him. I have a great respect for him. I think he had got in a very difficult situation. I think he should not have been indicted. But I really can't speak for his personal position.

BROKAW: Mr. Colby, I know that you realize that your name has come up again recently because a former CIA officer, John Stockwell, charges that in another case, in your appearance before Congress, you were not only not candid, you were lying, he charges. He says that the CIA was actively involved in giving military advice in Angola at a time when you were telling Congress that it was only there to gather intelligence. This is about three years ago now when Angola was teetering on the brink of which way it was going to go.

COLBY: Well, I just deny the statement that I was misleading or lying to Congress. I don't think I was. I know the difference between an operation in which we engage ourselves in active support, training, advice in a country, as in Laos, and a situation in which we essentially run our operations from outside, as in Angola.

Now I reported to the Congress that certain people went in an out of Angola to find out what was going on, what was happening. And to say that some individual at the far edges may have told some fellow to point his gun that way instead of that way changes that basic approach I reject. It did not.

BROKAW: So you say that there may have been -- there may have been only isolated instances....

COLBY: There may have been a few isolated instances. I can't speak to that....

BROKAW: Where someone didn't follow orders.

COLBY: I'm talking about the real strategy of the operation, which was to run it outside of Angola, provide the support, provide the weapons and so forth, as approved by our executive branch, as briefed to the Congress, and to send people in and out to check up on what's going on.

BROKAW: Isn't it possible that people in the field got carried away and....

COLBY: It's possible...

BROKAW: ...that both of you....

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COLBY: Well, that's what I say. One or two cases like that I really find at the far edge and not changing the fundamental strategy.

BROKAW: Stockwell makes another claim. He says that lying is such a way of life in the CIA that after a while it's difficult for both field officers and even Directors to know the difference.

COLBY: Well, I don't think that's true at all. I think the discipline in CIA has been very high over the years. That's why I use the title, "Honorable Men." I think the people in CIA have been both honorable men and women over the years. And I think that, sure, there are times in which you have to mislead a foreign country, but that certainly does not allow you to mislead your own country and your own people.

BROKAW: Even with the kind of purge that we've had of the CIA and the clandestine operations, the cloak and dagger operations that have gone on around the world, isn't it difficult to control those agents who are out there in the field who must be given, necessarily, a large degree of autonomy? Isn't it difficult to control them and to put traces on them, if you will?

COLBY: Well, we have probably the best communications system in the world. And the tradition is very strong that we have to report daily, frequently, even more often, as to what we're doing and what we're proposing to do. And that flow of traffic back and forth between field and headquarters goes on all the time.

In that sense, I think the tradition is that headquarters must control these operations, because they're politically very delicate; they're very complicated; they're very dangerous in certain situations. And that kind of risk cannot be assumed by the fellow in the field. It must be controlled by headquarters.

We went through this in Laos, for example, for years in which we directed our people not to engage in combat. And the control on that was very strong. And as a result, in over ten years in Laos, we lost something like five or six men, which was very minor.

BROKAW: As we reexamine the future now of the CIA, as a lot of people are these days, what do you think we ought to do about controls and oversight committees? Do you think it ought to be a shared responsibility of the various branches of government?

COLBY: Absolutely. I think that we have finally resolved an inherent contradiction between the ancient tradition of total secrecy in intelligence and the requirements of the American Constitution, that for years we never resolved that. We thought that

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Intelligence was outside the law and outside the Constitution and something for the President to do all by himself. I think we have resolved that we do need congressional committees in each of the houses who will know the secrets, who will control what's happening. We also need a clear statement as to what the proper limits and the improper activities of CIA would be.

I think this law that's in the Senate now -- I would argue certain details of it -- but I think it's essential that we pass that as soon as we can so that we can get over this stage and go back to work.

BROKAW: But isn't that likely to put our intelligence gathering at a disadvantage in a world where they don't always play by the rules or by committee oversight?

COLBY: No, I think we have other advantages that more than compensate for any control on that. And frankly, I think that being sure that the rules are clear and that we are following it will create more support from the American people than this kind of explosion after the fact and looking back and hindsighting whether something should have happened. I think we'll be better off rather than worse off in the long term, even though some things we certainly will not do, because the Congress disagrees with doing it. That's our democratic system. That's our system here in this country.

BROKAW: I want to ask you a couple of personal questions. What do you miss most about being a spy?

COLBY: The daily intelligence reports that I used to get, which were the best information I've ever seen and ever will see about what's happening the world around us. The Morning News -- I have to work very hard to try to keep myself informed about faraway parts now. And it was really quite simple to do at that time.

BROKAW: You describe in your book how in your early days when you were working in Scandinavia you developed the gray man attitude; you tried to blend into the woodwork, so to speak. Now you do have, if you will pardon me, a kind of Melvin Milque-toast appearance....

COLBY: Right.

BROKAW: ...about you. Is that cultivated?

COLBY: I think it's partly natural and partly cultivated. I would say a little bit of both, yes. I never was a very flamboyant personality any way, and so then maybe that's why I was in CIA all these years.

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BROKAW: What are some of the habits that you've retained now in your civilian life that are carry-overs, really, from your professional life?

COLBY: Oh, of not being a great -- not exposing very much my future activities, not being very nosy about my personal habits and activities, as a kind of basic, fundamental principle of safety.

BROKAW: I want to ask you about intelligence gathering in a nation that has the largest population in the world, China. Now when Hua Kuo-feng was named Premier, we didn't know who he was or where he came from. Is that the most difficult assignment for the CIA -- China?

COLBY: Oh, I think it's among them. I mean you could say Albania matches up, or some place like that. But certainly China is a very difficult area to know about.

We can know about the physical things now, thanks to technology, that has revolutionized our knowledge of weapons systems and armies and navies, and things like that. That's no problem any more, really. The difficult problems today are political and economic and social factors that are going on around the world. And when you put a wall around a country the Chinese do and indoctrinate and discipline the population totally, it is sometimes quite hard to learn a lot about it.

Now obviously we study hard everything they say, read not only the national papers, but the regional ones and things like that, and look for differences, look for indications, look for the names of people on their way up, and that sort of thing, because even a totalitarian country has to speak to its own population. And you can read that and get things out of it. And then you have to in some cases have some people in that country who will tell you some of the inside secrets. Otherwise, you'll be ignorant of them.

BROKAW: But it's tough in China.

COLBY: It's tough.

BROKAW: Bill Colby, the author of Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA.

Jane Pauley?